

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

CURRENT ORNITHOLOGY. Volume 10. Edited by Dennis M. Power. Plenum Press, New York, 1993: xiv + 383 pp. \$85.00 (cloth).—This review series has now spanned a decade, a tribute to the importance of the service it provides. The present volume deals with subjects as diverse as “trophic structure of raptor communities: a three-continent comparison and synthesis” and “evolution of avian ontogenies.”

The first paper in the volume, “The role of phylogenetic history in the evolution of contemporary avian mating and parental care systems,” by J. D. Ligon, is a rich, imaginative review of mating systems. I intend to assign it as required reading to bird students, once they have sufficient taxonomic background to follow the phylogeny.

“Trophic structure of raptor communities: a three-continent comparison and synthesis,” by C. D. Marti, E. Korpimäki, and F. M. Jaksic, is unusual in that it is more of an analysis of existing data than a review of existing literature, although the literature review is also extensive, and the paper is a wonderful source of citations and sources for raptor diet data.

“Matrix methods for avian demography,” by D. B. McDonald and H. Caswell, is, at first, daunting to those of us with a phobia for equations and symbols. However, the problem is illusionary. The text, while dealing with complex analyses, is readable and the symbolism clear and easily (even by me) followed. The paper will undoubtedly be useful to students of avian populations, a research area which becomes more important with growth of human populations.

“Nocturnality in colonial waterbirds: occurrence, special adaptations, and suspect benefits,” by R. McNeil, P. Drapeau, and R. Pierotti, amazed me in its content. I simply had no idea that so much work had been done in the field. Reading this chapter led me to add a lot of material on the subject to my class lectures on avian behavior.

“Latitudinal gradients in avian species diversity and the role of long-distance migration,” by K. N. Rabenold, is the shortest chapter in the volume. This may be a result of the existence of previous reviews of materials related to the topic. Understanding evolutionary and ecological control of species diversity has been one of the major thrusts of ornithology over the past three decades. Rabenold’s chapter carries this subject forward significantly without being redundant.

“Evolution of avian ontogenies,” by J. M. Starck, is very different from other chapters in the volume. Profusely illustrated, it covers growth and development from the perspective of histology, embryology, morphology, and ecology. It truly is a synthesis of ornithological ontogeny.

It is obvious that reviews in this series have become much more specialized (and their titles longer) in comparison with earlier issues. (First volume titles such as “Comparative avian demography” and “Bird chromosomes” were typical of earlier volumes.) This, perhaps, is a consequence of the considerable growth and development of information about ornithological subject materials. It has always been my contention that ornithology is first of all a science like all other branches of zoology. It therefore should be expected that knowledge in the field should become more fine-structured, technical, and insightful.

The present volume accomplishes what I expect from a review series. The papers thoroughly review their subject materials, survey the most modern advances, and synthesize the findings in a way that extends our understanding a bit farther.—C. R. BLEM.